

Washington, DC -- U.S. Rep. Michael A. Arcuri (D-Utica) issued the following statement upon his return from Iraq with a bipartisan Congressional Delegation mission led by fellow U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek (D-FL). Below is also an overview of Arcuri's itinerary in Iraq.

"In Iraq, I saw first-hand what I already knew, that the brave men and women who are fighting in Iraq and risking their lives are the very best that this country has to offer and incredibly good at what they do. Their courage and determination is inspiration to all of us. If the Iraqi government were half as determined to make the present government work as our troops are, the job would be done today and all of our combat troops would be on their way home.

"While our troops continue to shed their blood, the factions in Iraq continue to posture and delay in the desperate hope that something may change or the circumstances for their own party may some how improve. Our troops put their precious lives in jeopardy and swelter in 120 degree heat while the Iraqi politicians refuse to negotiate or compromise. The surge was intended to create stability for political reconciliation in Iraq and that has simply not happened.

"During our meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Dr. SALAM AL-ZUWBA'I, I asked him a very simple question, what do I tell my constituents and friends in New York about why we should stay here? He did not answer my question at all. If the Deputy Prime Minister doesn't know why we should stay, what reason could there be?

"I await the recommendations of General Petraeus in September and sincerely hope that all parties of the Iraqi Government decide they are determined to take Iraq's future into their own hands so that we can bring our troops home. We must get back to focusing on issues here at home like health care, our crumbling infrastructure, and economic growth.

"I have read with interest the results of the recent Zogby Poll on American attitudes regarding Iraq, and after my trip to Iraq, I am more convinced than ever that he has it right. Americans are tired of this prolonged war. They are unhappy about the reasons that we are there. And they do not want us to lose. The American people want their elected representatives to come together and find a solution - to finish the job and bring our brave troops home from Iraq. My constituents don't want us to start in two years or some vague time next year -- they want action now. We must immediately begin a timely and responsible redeployment to bring our brave men and women home."

While in Iraq Arcuri's Itinerary Included:

- Emergency Response Unit Brief/Demo
- Meeting with Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno
- Working Lunch with Ambassador Ryan Crocker and General David Patreus.
- Tour of Multi-National Force West
- Meeting with Provincial Reconstruction Team Leadership
- Meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Salam al-Zuwba'i
- Tour of Precinct One in Fallujah
- Dinner with New York Soldiers

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